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REVIEWS OF BOOKS

Spiritual interpretation of history. By Shailer Mathews, A.M., D.D., LL.D., professor of historical and comparative theology and dean of the divinity school, University of Chicago. [William Belden Noble lectures] (Cambridge: Harvard university press, 1916. 227 p. \$1.50)

Does history mean the "utilization of documents," — the expression in literary form of the results of research in "sources" and synthesis in accordance with ascertained principles of method? Or does the word properly connote that which has happened, — *das Geschehene*? Which-ever view one takes, one meets further questions. Viewed from the standpoint of method, can history be a science? Viewed as the events themselves, does history consist of scattered facts or groups of facts, or of an unfolding whole? And if the latter, what is the principle of the unfolding?

In the volume before us, which contains six lectures delivered at Harvard university upon the William Belden Noble foundation, Mr. Shailer Mathews, with much learning and profundity of thought, and with great charm of expression, attacks that interpretation of history, in the second of the senses suggested above, which posits as fundamental or predominant the materialistic or economic factors; and offers instead a "spiritual interpretation of history." Almost at the outset Mr. Mathews declares that he sets before himself "no such task as that of the philosopher;" but the reader will question this disclaimer and will find in the book an impressive presentation of philosophical idealism, held close, indeed, as the author intends, to the actualities of life. If it is not with the other-worldliness of the city of God that Mr. Mathews would deal, it is because he sees the city of God nascent in this world of men.

In the first lecture, he brings to the bar of criticism the economic interpretation of history, emphasizing the tendency of those who adhere to this school to neglect the "plus" factors of personality, great men, ideals in social customs, and other non-economic elements of human life. At the close of this discourse he discusses the limits of a spiritual interpretation of history set by a real world; then, contending that, instead of a single hypothesis, the historian should employ a "multiple" hypothesis, because "it may very well be that he will discover that human history

is carried along by a variety of forces which are capable of no synthesis this side of metaphysics," Mr. Mathews in his next lecture declares that tendencies and directions in history may not be judged except by the examination of long periods. "It is through perspective that history is to be interpreted." Carrying this thought over into a rapid survey of history as a whole, he proceeds to support his thesis by a selection of special periods—the development of Greece, the early years of christianity, and the protestant reformation. In modern times he sees a proof of the recognition of spiritual forces in the growing emphasis which economic thought lays upon consumption as over against production. But a larger proof is attempted in the three following chapters, which adduce, as evidence of the justness of maintaining the presence of a spiritual factor in the world's progress, the substitution of moral control for the control of force; the growing recognition of the worth of the individual; and the increasing transformation of "rights" into "justice." The last lecture of the series makes practical application of the principles evolved in their bearing on the intellectual life, on social reconstruction, and on foreign missions.

If this summary suggests to the professional student of history in the narrower sense something of the "all History shows" type of sermon which he not infrequently hears with sorrow, the reading of the book will dispel the false reminder: for it is Mr. Mathews who speaks and it does not need the apparatus of references to works of German, French, and English writers in the fields of religion and church history, sociology, philosophy and comparative law, to persuade one that here is a product of a deep and wide scholarship. The learning is accompanied with a felicity of expression that delights: as when Mr. Mathews describes a certain type of historiography as "an infinite number of doctors' theses united by a card catalog;" and when he says that "the general curves of statistics are not composed of individuals. They are only the fences on each side of the road we individuals travel at our own pace, and they in no way prevent some of us every now and then from jumping over the fence." Sometimes, indeed, this manner of argument by an illustration or by an analogy has its dangers, but it is always entertaining.

Of course, as the argument proceeds, questions arise in the reader's mind. What tribunal shall pass on the "long periods," necessary for historical inductions? What estimate shall be made of periods of retrogression? Some of the deductions as to a super-person, applied to some times and places of history, might be used to prove anything but beneficent tendency or guidance. After all, the technical student of

history may be tempted to say, how much do we really know of these long periods, particularly of those which are so little documented?

Nevertheless, if the over-skeptical student of documents be disposed to apply to Mr. Mathews the latter's own saying—that the historian who enters into metaphysics “has gone to a far country from whose bourne he will never return a historian,” he will readily concede the stimulating effect of this review of the past with outlook towards the future, and will greet it as a highly suggestive critique of those materialistic philosophies of history which are no more historical, and which are certainly far less inspiring.

ST. GEORGE L. SIOUSSAT

Purpose of history. By Frederick J. E. Woodbridge. (New York: Columbia university press, 1916. \$1.00 net)

The lectures comprised in this volume constitute an endeavor “to discover in what sense the idea of purpose in history is appropriate.” It is contended that history is pluralistic, having many practically disconnected strands, so that there are in fact as many histories as there are interests. Historic evolution is presented in Bergsonian fashion as a continuous creative process in which surviving elements are temporarily reshaped, but in which there is no unity, direction, beginning, or goal except what may be arbitrarily assumed by the acceptance of some limited point of view. Historic continuity is, however, emphasized, but the danger into which evolutionists fall of confusing continuity with causation is clearly pointed out. And a degree of purpose, humanly speaking, is admitted in that man in the pursuit of spiritual ends may seek to round out to some fulfillment certain traditional tendencies.

The book is an able presentation of the trend of philosophic thinking as applied to the interpretation of history. Its thesis is in contrast, however, with the later point of view of the social sciences, which looks with more favor on an interpretation of social evolution as a convergence toward “one far-off divine event” in the form of the eventual realization of social ideals.

Foreign policy of Woodrow Wilson, 1913-1917. By Edgar E. Robinson, assistant professor of American history, Leland Stanford Junior university, and Victor J. West, assistant professor of political science, Leland Stanford Junior university. (New York: Macmillan company, 1917. 428 p. \$2.25 net)

The aim of the authors of this book has been to present a concise review of the development of President Wilson's foreign policy from his accession to the presidency in 1913 to the entrance of the United States